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ABSTRACT

Goals for Alabama public higher education for the next 10 years are recommended by the Council of Twenty-One. The achievement of excellence is the central developmental goal recommended to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, the governor and legislature, the boards and administrators of colleges and universities, and business, labor, and industry. Specific measures and initiatives that are proposed include: (1) statewide long-range planning leading to a system of higher education institutions that are cost-effective, avoid unnecessary duplication and contribute to the development of the state's economy and its human and natural resources; (2) a strengthened governance structure, one with the capacity to implement plans for a more effective and efficient system of higher education; (3) clearly defined institutional role and scope statements that provide a basis for differentiated missions and appropriate funding distinctions; (4) quality enhancement measures, including improvements in vocational and academic instruction, requirements for program accreditation, revised admissions policies, and support for university research; and (5) a system of higher education financing that recognizes the competitive position of institutions relative to their peers in other states. (SW)

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The Report of
THE COUNCIL OF TWENTY-ONE

Challenge - Obligation - Opportunity
THE IMPERATIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

HE019720

Presented to:
The Alabama Commission on Higher Education
The Honorable George C. Wallace, Governor
The Legislature of Alabama

July 1983

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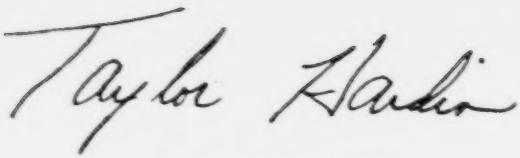

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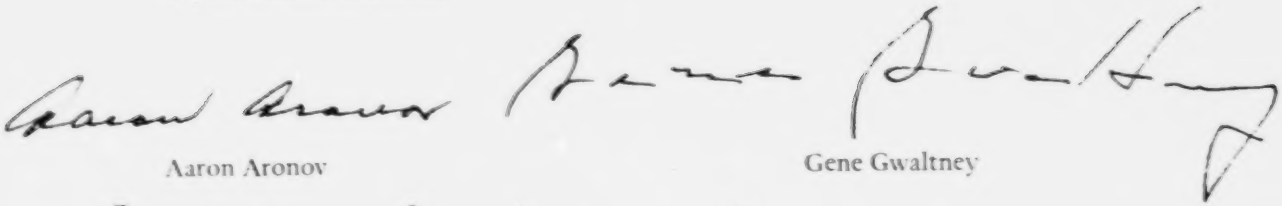

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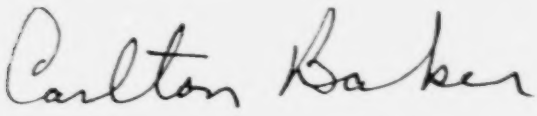

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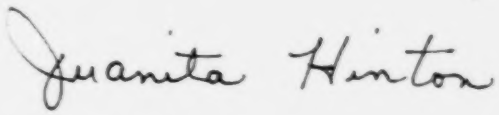

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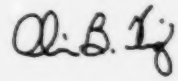

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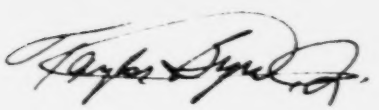

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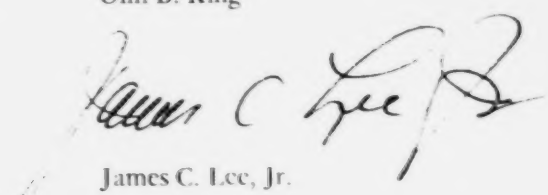

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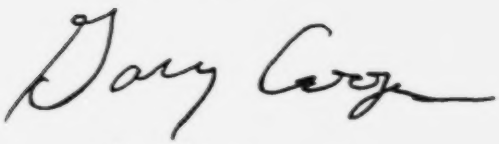

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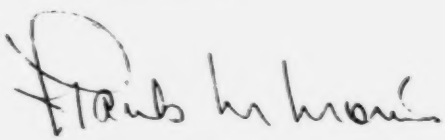

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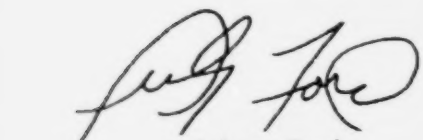

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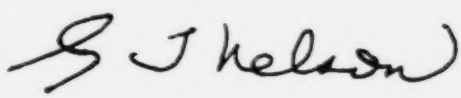

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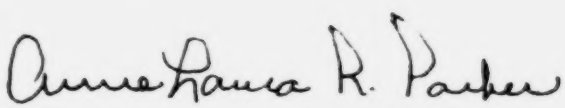

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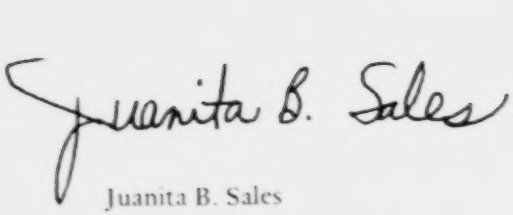

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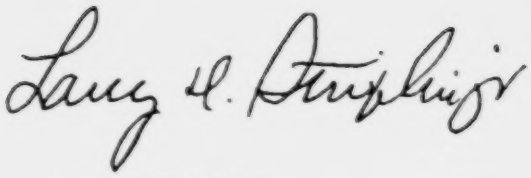

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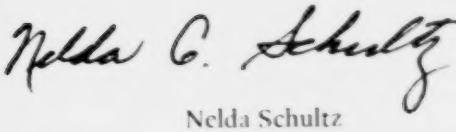

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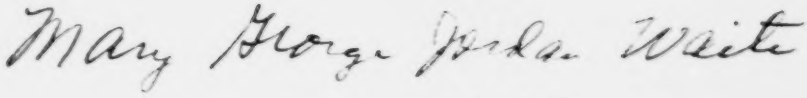

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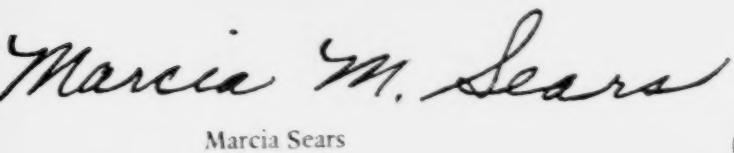

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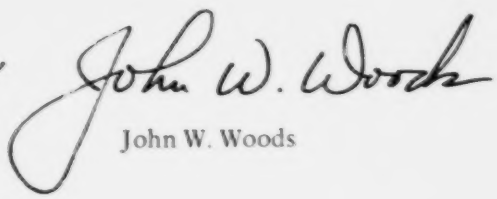

John W. Woods

FOREWORD

In the Fall of 1982, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education established the Council of Twenty-One and appointed as members a statewide cross section of twenty-one individuals chosen for their records of accomplishment and interest in higher education. The Commission charged the Council to develop and propose recommendations for the direction that public higher education in Alabama should take during the coming decade. Specifically, the Council was asked to address the following basic questions:

1. What are the principal problems and the major opportunities that face Alabama today and over the next decade?

2. What special responsibilities should higher education have in solving these problems or seizing these opportunities?

Since its initial meeting on October 25, 1982, the Council has held monthly working meetings during which a broad range of information on higher education was reviewed and considered. This information included numerous presentations from national and state experts and leaders in higher education, as well as applicable reports from groups such as the Governor's Task Force on Economic Recovery. To facilitate its work, the Council divided itself into the following four committees:

Economic Development Committee
John Woods, Chairman

Government/Public Administration Committee
Carlton Baker, Chairman

Natural Resources Committee
G. T. Nelson, Chairman

Human Resources Committee
Gary Cooper, Chairman

These Committees worked independently, and each produced a report on its area; the recommendations in these reports were then considered by the full Council and formed the basis of this document.

This report, **Challenge – Obligation – Opportunity: The Imperative for Excellence in Higher Education**, represents the considered judgment of the Council of Twenty-One on the direction Alabama public higher education should move if it is to make the greatest contribution to the State during the coming ten years. In submitting this report, the Council members wish to express their gratitude for the assistance provided by the Commission staff and by the representatives of higher education institutions.

Taylor Hardin

Taylor Hardin
Chairman

CHALLENGE – OBLIGATION – OPPORTUNITY
THE IMPERATIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since the establishment of the Council of Twenty-One, there has been a virtual explosion of national interest and concern over the condition of education in the United States. The event which served as a catalyst for public attention in this regard was the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Education Reform* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. At the heart of the report and in the widespread public discussion it elicited is a fear that America's educational system, taken as a whole, is failing to prepare the nation to compete and to prosper in a world economy which is increasingly driven by technology and technological innovation. In its report to the President entitled *America's Competitive Challenge: The Need for a National Response*, the prestigious Business-Higher Education Forum sounded a similar theme in urging institutional change in higher education to assist the Nation in achieving and maintaining global and industrial competitiveness. In addition, recent statements by national leaders indicate that educational reform may be an issue in the 1984 Presidential campaign.

Following careful consideration of a broad range of information and opinion, it is the collective judgment of the Council of Twenty-One that these national education concerns are directly relevant to the issue of how Alabama's public higher education institutions can best help the State respond to its problems and opportunities. Like the Nation, Alabama exists within a highly competitive industrial environment, and its citizens must realize that the State's ability to compete within that environment is the key to its economic growth, which, in turn, is the principal determinant of its overall quality of life. In this report, the Council recognizes, as should all Alabamians, the direct link between the education and research activities of higher education institutions and technological innovation and competence, which are the key elements of the modern world economy. From this perspective, the crucial importance of public higher education to Alabama's future becomes apparent.

The Findings of the Council

As a major part of its charge, the Council was asked to identify "the principal problems and the major opportunities that face Alabama today and over the next decade." In examining problem areas, the members generally agreed with the findings of the Governor's Task Force on Economic Recovery of January, 1983. The report noted Alabama's "under-developed human and natural resources, relatively poor image, and low ranking in quality of life" indicators – conditions which hinder the State's economic and social progress. The Council is also keenly aware of the many human problems – poverty, malnutrition, poor health, and, more recently, high unemployment – which are derivatives of the failure to progress economically. **The hard reality is that Alabama, despite all efforts, remains at or near the bottom among its sister states in most of the important measures of socio-economic status.**

Along with these difficult problems, the Council also found opportunity and potential. Alabama has so many assets – geography, location, climate, natural resources, energy, an industrious work force, and inherent leadership – that it should be near the top, not bottom, of the economic standings. Yet, these assets have been present for years, and Alabama has been unable to achieve its economic potential. It is the judgment of the Council that with planning and a full statewide commitment, Alabama can be poised to "take off" economically. Public higher education can play a key role in triggering and sustaining such growth and progress.

The Council has also concluded that unfortunately the State's higher education institutions, with few exceptions, are not presently prepared, to fulfill such a role. **There are many reasons for this circumstance, but the most significant, in the view of the Council, is the historical absence of statewide planning for the development of higher education.** By planning, the Council refers to a process which identifies State needs, sets overall goals and priorities, and ensures that the institutions and programs respond to these statewide determinations and receive support in some relationship to their measured contributions. To date, this has not occurred; rather, the interaction of institutional and community-based interests have determined the direction of higher education. **Alabama cannot afford to continue in such a manner. While narrow local interests will always be a part of the politics of higher education, the overall good of the State must now become paramount, not an afterthought.**

The Recommendations of the Council

The recommendations of the Council represent the members' best judgment as to how higher education must develop in order to assist the State in the competition for economic growth and social progress. The first steps are to establish a statewide consensus on the importance of education and to develop a central goal for higher education. Such a goal must be the ultimate objective for state and institutional planning efforts and the standard against which institutions, programs, and activities in higher education are measured. It is the judgment of the Council that this central developmental goal must be the achievement of excellence throughout the higher education system. Therefore, the Council makes the following primary recommendation:

> **The Governor, the Legislature, other officials of State and local government, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, and institutional leaders should seek to develop a statewide consensus as to the need for excellence in higher education and a statewide commitment to the achievement of such excellence.**

The Council wishes to make it clear that it would not propose to pursue the goal of excellence solely by allocating substantial additional amounts of tax dollars among existing institutions and programs. In some circumstances, additional funds may be in

order, but this is not the major thrust of the Council's proposals. In addition, the standard of excellence, coupled with a concern for higher education's role in economic development, should be the basis for substantial reform and attendant reallocation of resources.

It is the Council's view that the State's foreseeable resources will not be sufficient to develop all of the presently existing components of public higher education to a condition of excellence. Accordingly, it will be necessary to ensure cost effectiveness by focusing the role and scope of institutions and programs; only in this way will each have an opportunity to achieve excellence. Such measures, which will include program terminations and consolidations will be difficult to achieve politically without a broad consensus and commitment to the goal of excellence.

The specific recommendations in this report each bear upon the major goal of achieving excellence. Briefly, these recommendations for higher education relate to the following areas:

1. *An outline for a comprehensive long-range planning system to guide the development of higher education over the coming decade;*

2. *The establishment of a system of governance that is consistent with the effort to achieve excellence and enhance economic development;*

3. *Guidelines for the reassessment of the proper role and scope for the various institutions;*

4. *Specific quality enhancement measures applicable to all public postsecondary education; and*

5. *Improved methods of financing higher education in Alabama.*

In addressing the questions posed by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and after completing its work, the Council sees no **insurmountable** problems in Alabama higher education. Indeed, the membership believes that the State's future can be bright if its recommended actions are taken. These actions are contained in the five general areas and are outlined later in the Report.

Problems and Opportunities

Consistent with findings of the Governor's Task Force on Economic Recovery Report and with testimony given recently before the Interim Legislative Committee on High Technology and Economic Development, the Council's findings indicate that Alabama has suffered a low-ranking on many "quality of life" indicators including:

– *poor public services in several key areas and inaccessible services in others;*

– *underdeveloped human resources;*

– *inadequately explored and developed natural resources;*

– *lack of a public policy or a plan to guide growth and development; and*

– *an inadequate system of public education.*

These conditions must no longer be allowed to continue. They have long been detrimental to the development of Alabama. It is time that State leaders stopped looking back at the negative historical influences that have crippled Alabama and the South. Alabama can no longer endure nor accept:

– *an economic level inferior to surrounding states that have less potential and fewer natural resources;*

– *an unacceptably high level of poverty, particularly among Alabama's black and rural populations;*

– *one of the country's highest and most severe unemployment rates caused, in part, by worker displacement resulting from industrial concentration in old technologies;*

– *chronic physical and mental health problems persisting in the State's population;*

– *an unusually high number of children born out of wedlock;*

– *underutilization of industrial potential and capacity;*

– *poorly prepared students progressing through and completing formal education; and*

– *a system of higher education that is characterized by wasteful duplication, unplanned growth, and unacceptable levels of mediocrity.*

Alabama has vast potential. The Council's review revealed an impressive array of opportunities and advantages for the State including:

– *a geography and location that promises massive growth and development;*

– *a pleasant climate;*

– *a work force willing to develop the skills needed in business and industry;*

– *an exceptional wealth of diverse natural resources, such as forest lands, minerals, water, and energy; and*

– *inherent leadership.*

The rapidly changing economic environment will create numerous business and industrial opportunities which Alabama can seize with a positive strategy developed around excellence in higher education. Alabama's institutions of higher education already support: a multi-billion-dollar space industry; agricultural, forestry, and technical research; research that assists development of the State's mineral and energy resources; and biomedical research and health care. Other examples of programs that support economic and academic development are the mobile industrial training program of the Alabama Industrial Development Training Institute and the Sea Grant Consortium on the Gulf Coast.

With this report, the Council is offering a proposal for those who are responsible for guiding higher education into the future. In its deliberations, the Council identified four groups of leaders: (1) the boards and administrators of colleges and universities, (2) the Commission on Higher Education, (3) the Governor and Legislature, and (4) business, labor, and industry. We offer recommendations to each as a result of our work. **These leaders must work effectively and cooperatively to move Alabama's system of higher education to the forefront of the nation.**

Long-Range Planning

Recognizing that Alabama is relatively poor, the Council believes that the State is in need of a long-range plan that will ensure the existence of high quality academic programs offered in cost effective ways. In the absence of a statewide plan, schools and colleges have been established within close proximity of one another under the guise of offering accessible education to all citizens. In addition, institutions have felt free to offer programs which were already established and offered nearby or for which there might be only minimal need. The system of higher education has also allowed the creation of programs with little attention being given to their potential for improving the quality of life and influencing economic development. By spreading resources too thinly to institutions and programs, Alabama now has many mediocre programs. There can be no doubt that duplication has resulted, in part, from the use of a funding formula that has placed undue emphasis on enrollment growth.

However, the Council recognizes that there are a number of programs in the State which have achieved national reputations for excellence. More could be accomplished if programs such as these were given the emphasis, attention, and support they require in a statewide plan. Clearly, with the funding limitations facing Alabama's colleges and universities, a long-range plan is necessary if the State is to hold its own and move forward aggressively.

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education created in 1969 was not given the responsibility for long-range planning by the Legislature until 1979. Although for several years there has been a statewide interest in planned growth in higher education, the Council finds that there does not presently exist an accepted comprehensive long-range plan. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education must now assume the leadership in this process and become the coordinating body for the creation of a long-range plan for higher education. The individual universities, governed by their boards of trustees and the Board of Education (in the case of the two-year schools), must accept their share of the responsibility for planning. **For the planning process to be effective, it must be a cooperative effort, with political interference removed as much as possible.**

The State's plan for higher education must be comprehensive and address several key areas of concern. These include:

- *Funding for higher education;*
- *Goals and priority setting for the system as a whole and for the institutions;*
- *Providing for appropriate access to higher education;*
- *Responding effectively to business and industrial needs for development and implementation of new technology;*
- *Evaluating the effectiveness of higher education which will include the creation of effective bases of data;*
- *Ensuring proper management of the institutions with appropriate emphasis being placed on high quality, efficiently-operated programs;*
- *Coordination and governance of the State's system of higher education; and*
- *Identification of the proper role for the various institutions and sectors of higher education in the State's economic development.*

Long-range planning for Alabama's system of postsecondary education should be undertaken by the various groups that are affected by and who affect higher education. In varying degrees, participation in this process should include the following:

- *The state agencies for planning and coordination in higher education;*
- *The institutional boards of trustees;*
- *State executive and legislative officials;*
- *Institutional administrative, faculty, and student representatives; and*
- *The business and labor leadership in the State.*

Effective statewide planning for higher education can occur only as a result of the efforts of a dedicated Chief Executive, committed Legislative leadership, and cooperative institutions. **It is the opinion of the Council of Twenty-One that despite the worthwhile intentions of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, its present structure, staffing, and funding prevent it from developing a workable plan for the entire State.** The Council encourages State leadership to create a system of higher education that is well-planned and coordinated and that minimizes the existence of unnecessary duplication of effort. If the State Legislature desires that the Alabama Commission on Higher Education continue to function as the State planning agency for higher education, it must give it the funding, authority, staffing, and structure to do its job.

Specific recommendations by the Council concerning State-level planning for higher education are as follows:

- **For the sake of quality of programs and economy of operation, particular attention must be given to the establishment of acceptable enrollment ranges for public colleges in Alabama. Guidelines for institutional sizes of 2,000 to 5,000 for two-year colleges as suggested by the Carnegie Commission seem reasonable, although some consideration must be given to the sparseness of Alabama's population. The Council membership believes that reasonable enrollment ranges for the senior institutions are also in order. In Fall, 1981, 9 of the 21 two-year colleges in Alabama had equivalent full-time student enrollments under 1,000. Only three had enrollments over 2,000.**

- **The Council acknowledges the fact that duplication of effort in higher education is an exceptionally complex situation requiring much thought and study; however, in cases where two or more public institutions (4-year, 2-year, Voc-Tech) exist in the same area,**

studies should be immediately undertaken to determine if cost savings and enhancement of program quality would be significant to warrant consolidations or, at the very least, to create cooperative programs. It is the unanimous opinion of the Council that there is significant unnecessary duplication of effort caused by the location of schools in close proximity to one another.

- A statewide effort should be made to examine closely the problem of excess faculty and staff caused by declining enrollments and changing technologies in certain academic areas. Appropriate efforts must be undertaken to retrain faculty and staff and to transfer faculty and staff within and among the institutions of higher education to respond to changes in enrollment patterns. In cases where retraining and reassignment are not possible and where enrollments and demand do not warrant continuing faculty and staff at present levels, consideration must be given to reducing the size of the faculty, staff, and administration to meet the new demands. All institutions should improve their tenure and promotion granting processes to ensure the most productive educational environment.

- Institutional budget requests should be analyzed and considered in the context of currently existing programs and seriously proposed programs. Unplanned growth in budgets and programs should be discontinued.

- The State planning agency for higher education, together with the Board of Education, should assume responsibility for the development of an accurate and up-to-date system for identifying the human resource needs of the State. An integrated system that carefully identifies, monitors, and evaluates the educational needs of all Alabama citizens must be created.

- The State planning agency for higher education must assist in coordinating a plan for the involvement of the major research universities in the State's natural resource and economic development efforts. Examples of institutional resources applicable to natural resources development include high technology research; mining and minerals research; and agricultural, forestry, and fisheries research. The Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium has also proven useful in the natural resource area. These areas are complemented by biomedical research underway in the State that includes genetic engineering and biotechnology.

At the institutional level, the individual campuses must be required to develop strategic plans that are consistent with the statewide plan. Plans of the institutions should seek to describe their present status, identify future directions, and develop mechanisms and processes that will marshall forces and support progressive advancement in an orderly fashion. An effective planning process provides continuous feedback and allows for self correction to meet changing environmental circumstances. In regard to institutional planning, the Council recommends that:

- **Institutions of higher education must improve their system of setting priorities. Limits must be established by the institutions and each institution should identify and defend clear priorities.**

- **Comprehensive student followup study procedures must be developed and used by institutions.**

- **Institutions should use student followup survey results in planning for future programs and for evaluating existing programs.**

Governance

The Council is convinced that the present structure of governance does not provide enough central structure and authority to deal with the problems and the challenges that face higher education. Some believe that the State Legislature should provide the Alabama Commission on Higher Education with more authority and then demand that a plan for a decade of development in higher education be created. Others, including the recently appointed Committee to Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, believe that the current system of organization (regulatory coordinating arrangement) could function without significant change.

The Council believes that the key to more efficient and effective higher education services lies with a **strengthened** system of planning and governance – **one that includes appropriate authority over existing and future program development**. The Council recognizes that there are several alternatives for such an organizational structure; some of these alternatives would require enabling legislation to establish. It recommends consideration of at least the following options:

- **A clear legislative mandate for the role and scope of the constitutionally-based systems (University of Alabama System and Auburn) and separate boards of governance for the regional four-year institutions and for the two year institutions;**

- **Institutional groupings that result in a multi-system arrangement such as a University of Alabama System and an Auburn University System, with a separate system for two-year colleges;**

– **The establishment of a constitutionally-based coordinating agency or a single board of regents over all institutions.**

The Council will make no recommendations about the specific organizational structure for the State's higher education coordination/governance; however, its members do believe that a planning and coordinating agency that will ensure effective long-range planning, the elimination of unnecessary duplication of effort, and high-quality academic programs is needed. As regards statewide planning the Council recommends:

– **A strengthening of Alabama Commission on Higher Education short of according it constitutional status with firm guarantees of cooperation from the University of Alabama and Auburn Systems.**

Role and Scope

In order to build an educational system of high quality, the Council is convinced that Alabama institutions must have clearly defined role and scope statements. Because higher education now serves a multitude of educational needs and student levels, it is imperative that institutions, in conjunction with the State planning and coordinating agency, carefully examine their student clientele and student demand to determine appropriate curricula and programs. According to a recommendation by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, state plans and multi-campus systems should provide for differentiation of general functions among institutions and groups of institutions.

In difficult economic times, it is critical that public funds be allocated in the most cost effective ways; funds for higher education are no exception. All levels of education in Alabama should respond to the needs and expectations of their particular student clientele and service area as defined by their role and scope statements. **The Council of Twenty-One is firm in its recommendation that before any new educational functions are undertaken, institutions should determine the relationship of that function to their educational missions and to the overall objectives of higher education in the State.**

The importance of differentiated missions and roles, and the recognition of specialized strengths among State institutions has been demonstrated in other states. The importance of such characteristics for Alabama's institutions should not be minimized, for not only will their realization serve to enhance high quality programs, it will serve to eliminate and then avoid unnecessary duplication of effort in the future. Appropriate distinctions need to be drawn among the graduate/research universities, other graduate/baccalaureate institutions, and the primarily baccalaureate institutions; distinctions also need to be drawn among the roles and functions of the State's junior colleges and vocational/technical schools. The Council recommends that the following actions be taken:

– **Specify that each institution and its governing board delineate its specific and special role and mission.**

- Structure the defined specific roles, missions, and special strengths of each institution to form the basis for a systematic review of both existing and proposed higher education teaching, research, and service programs; the review process should be designed, endorsed, and adopted by each institution, its governing board, and coordinated by the State planning agency for higher education.

- Use defined institutional roles and missions as the primary basis for funding higher education institutions. It is expected that differences in student-faculty ratios, faculty-staff ratios, library resources, and quality of research equipment will occur.

- In accordance with differentiated role and scope statements – the State's institutions of higher education should become involved in the State's economic development efforts. This involvement may include:

  1. Sponsorship of economic development related research activities.

  2. Support of basic and applied research that results in spinoff industrial development.

  3. Joint efforts to recruit industry.

  4. Technical assistance to existing business and industry in implementing new technology and/or in expansion of operations. The Council believes that the State must continue to support its existing industrial base.

  5. Membership by university representatives on local, regional, and State economic development boards.

An important complement to increased economic development and technological advances is the continued emphasis on improving the quality of life. The Council sees the development of the arts, humanities, and recreation as important to the State's future. These kinds of activities enhance the educational environment and promote economic progress.

Quality Enhancement

Virtually all forecasts of enrollment in higher education in America for the next decade indicate that the number of students in all types of institutions will decrease. Given budgetary growth during a time of steady or declining enrollment, Alabama

institutions are offered a significant opportunity to enhance the quality of their instructional, research, and service programs.

To ensure that higher education programs are of the highest quality, institutions should take specific actions to address specific responsibilities. In order to develop a high quality system of higher education for Alabama, certain indicators of quality must be present. The Council believes that these indicators are important and that institutions should strive to ensure their presence.

Among the quality indicators that must be present at our institutions of higher education are the following:

1. *Well trained faculty who are committed to excellence in instruction;*
2. *Presence of nationally recognized research faculty at Ph.D. granting institutions;*
3. *Up-to-date instructional and research equipment;*
4. *Seed funds for research;*
5. *Staff and faculty who are able to apply research to State concerns;*
6. *Effective links between higher education and business and industry;*
7. *Continuing Education programs that are the same quality as regular campus offerings;*
8. *Library resources that are adequate to support first quality instruction and research; and*
9. *Guidance and counseling by capable staff.*

The Council believes that these quality indicators are important and that institutions should strive to see that these describe the situations that exist on college campuses throughout Alabama. To accomplish this the Council suggests that the following recommendations are appropriate:

– **Curricula at junior and senior colleges and the vocational/technical schools should be examined with a view toward taking actions necessary to improve the quality of instruction. Institutions (both junior and senior) should give appropriate consideration to their**

missions taking into consideration the availability of financial resources. Special attention should be given to strengthening and improving curricula in vocational education, and efforts must be initiated to ensure relevance of programs to modern industrial and technical development.

- Institutions should not pursue as an overriding goal commitments to maximizing enrollments; rather efforts should be undertaken to ensure that instructional, research, and service programs are top quality. A funding formula that recognizes high quality and takes into due consideration demographic differences in institutions should be adopted.

- At institutions where there are demonstrated needs, major new efforts should be made to upgrade library resources. The State should move to create a statewide network of academic libraries. Special attention should be directed to the enhancement of those libraries at designated institutions that support significant research activities.

- Appropriate national program accreditation should be a goal, objective, and requirement of all academic programs in Alabama higher education. The State should not continue to provide fiscal support for programs that fail to achieve national accreditation in a reasonable period of time.

- Steps should be taken to encourage research and scholarship at the colleges and universities in Alabama. These include:

    1. Offer stipends for graduate research and teaching assistants in designated programs that allow the institutions to compete with their peers in the region.

    2. Create a series of "Governor's Research Professorships" that are designated to assist the research and graduate institutions to compete with their peers in the region.

- Take actions to replace worn and outdated equipment and to purchase new types of equipment that are needed to support instruction and research. The State should create a fund to be used for the purpose of matching college and university funds that are generated from private sources for the purposes of enhancing research and instruction. An unbiased body should allocate the State matching funds.

– The Council feels that the resources of the business community are underutilized in Alabama higher education and it recommends that the institutions involve the State's business leaders in instructional and research programs. Business and industry could be helpful in the following areas:

1. Lecturing to classes on a highly selective basis;

2. Advising institutions on the development or modification of curricula and programs;

3. Identifying areas of need for research activities; and

4. Providing direct financial support.

– The State planning agency should evaluate institutional programs in community service and continuing education and develop long-range plans to ensure:

1. Appropriate access for adult and part-time students;

2. An emphasis on high-quality training; and

3. Relevance of offerings to business, industry, and government.

Non-credit offerings of colleges (2-year and 4-year) should be funded either through user fees, special State or federal contracts, or by payments from local governments or private agencies.

– The universities and colleges should place major emphasis on improvements in the areas of student recruitment, breadth of curricula, and career advising. To accomplish this the following actions should be taken:

1. Applicants should be required to complete a college preparatory tract in secondary schools prior to admission to postsecondary education institutions. All students should be expected to meet core requirements in mathematics, the physical sciences, English, and foreign languages. Because there presently exists an insufficient number of math and science teachers in Alabama efforts should be undertaken to graduate more and better prepared students from universities in these areas. The Council recommends that the State create a system of compensation that will encourage growth in numbers of graduates in math and science.

2. **Minimum admission standards should be established for the four-year colleges in the State. Standards must be reflective of the differentiated missions of the institutions.**

3. **All academic institutions in Alabama must establish core curriculum requirements.**

4. **Universities should implement appropriate merit scholarship programs aimed at retaining good students within the State and at encouraging students to pursue studies in certain targeted areas where there are shortages of trained personnel.**

5. **Institutions must initiate new efforts to evaluate student career potentials, and all institutions should ensure that students receive proper career guidance and counseling. Efforts to encourage student enrollment growth in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics should be given priority.**

In adjusting admissions standards, higher education is encouraged to be cognizant of the educational needs of disadvantaged students. Although the admissions requirements will be higher at certain institutions, educational opportunity will be provided through a system that offers both open and restricted enrollment policies.

Financing for Higher Education

The Council believes that the State's fiscal policy is in need of a comprehensive reform. Certainly, it is the view of the Council that in order for the State of Alabama to create excellence in higher education for this and future generations, additional revenues must be provided and expenditures must be made in a cost effective manner.

With this in mind, the Council acknowledges the existence of several facts that impact the State's ability to provide first quality higher education programs. These include:

1. *Total state support per student for higher education in Alabama in 1981-82 ranked in the bottom half in the Nation.*

2. *Alabama ranks near the bottom in the southern region in per student state support for regular academic programs in its four-year institutions of higher education.*

3. *Tuition charges in Alabama have been typically above the median for universities and colleges as compared with other southern states.*

4. *Faculty salaries at the institutions of higher education in Alabama are far less than the average of the southern states.*

5. *Alabama higher education receives a smaller percentage of its revenues from state appropriations than the other states in the southern region.*

6. *Available data indicate that Alabama's tax system overutilizes general and selective sales taxes and significantly underutilizes its property and estate and gift taxes.*

7. *Public education receives much less local support than the national average.*

Given these facts, the Council makes the following specific recommendations:

- **An independent body commissioned by the Governor and the Legislature should evaluate the tax system.**

- **Funding for regular academic programs should, at a minimum, equal by category of institution that of the median for the institutions in the southern region.**

- **Serious efforts should be made to compensate faculty with competitive salaries as compared with similar disciplines and categories of institution.**

- **All public institutions should be required to have an annual independent audit of their financial operations.**

- **The State must stimulate more local support for elementary/secondary education and for the community colleges in an effort to relieve some of the pressure on the Special Education Trust Fund.**

- **Careful attention should be given to establishing out-of-state tuition levels that equal or exceed the southern region average.**

Summary

In this report the Council of Twenty-One proposes the achievement of excellence as the central developmental goal for Alabama public higher education. In pursuit of this goal, the Council recommends the adoption of a broad range of specific measures and initiatives including:

– statewide *long-range planning* leading to a system of higher education institutions which are cost-effective, avoid unnecessary duplication and contribute to the development of the state's economy and its human and natural resources;

– a *strengthened governance structure*, one with the capacity to implement plans for a more effective and efficient system of higher education;

– clearly defined institutional *role and scope statements* which provide a basis for differentiated missions and appropriate funding distinctions;

– *quality enhancement* measures, including improvements in vocational and academic instruction, requirements for program accreditation, revised admissions policies and support for university research; and

– a system of higher education *financing* which recognizes the competitive position of institutions relative to their peers in other states.

As its primary recommendation, however, the Council urges Alabama's leaders to develop within the State a broad **consensus** about the need for excellence and a strong **commitment** to its achievement. Without this kind of public support, the Council's proposals are unlikely to be adopted and mediocrity will continue to characterize much of Alabama higher education. What is required is nothing less than a new politics of higher education – one which will make possible hard, but necessary, decisions. Achieving excellence in higher education will be demanding and difficult; as a goal it is . . .

– a CHALLENGE for Alabama's institutions,

– an OBLIGATION of state leadership, and

– an OPPORTUNITY for a better future for all our institutions.